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A

CHARGE

DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF LANDAFF,

JUNE, 1791.

BY

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LORD BISHOP OF LANDAFF.

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M.DCC.XCII.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

AFTER I had delivered the following Charge to the Clergy of my Dioceſe, I was requeſted by many of them, as well as by ſeveral of the Laity who heard it, to publiſh it. I had no reaſon for declining a Compliance with their requeſt, except the opinion I entertained of there being nothing in the Charge meriting the public notice. I have lately heard that a written paper, purporting to contain the Subſtance of my Charge, has been circulated with, perhaps, unbecoming, if not uncharitable Induſtry. The Circulators of that Paper will now have an opportunity of knowing—what a little candour might have taught them to ſuſpect—how defective Memory is in giving a juſt account of a diſcourſe of ſome length. Few Men are leſs moved by unmerited Cenſure, or leſs ſolicitous in repelling groundleſs Calumny, than I am; but I conceive it to be a Chriſtian Duty to ſuffer no man to continue in an Error, when it is in my power to remove it. Under the influence of that opinion I am obliged to trouble the World with this Publication.

London, Jan. 2, 1792. R. L.

A

CHARGE, &c.

REVEREND BRETHREN,

THIS is the third time in which the Relation I bear to you, as your Dioceſan, has obliged me to requeſt your attention to a ſhort addreſs. I have, on the two former occaſions, ſpoken to you with freedom and ſincerity: I ſhall, on this, proceed in my accuſtomed manner; intreating ſuch of you as ſhall not agree with me in ſentiment on any ſubject I may have occaſion to mention, to credit the Integrity of my Intention, and to excuſe the Imbecillity of my Argumentation.

A Revolution, as to the mode of its Accompliſhment, unparalleled in the Annals of the World, has taken place; or, to ſpeak more properly, is now taking place in the Civil and Religious Conſtitution of one of the greateſt Kingdoms in Europe. I deliver no opinion of cenſure or approbation on the ſupporters or oppoſers of this Revolution: it would be unſeaſonable to do it in this place, even if I was perfectly acquainted with all the cauſes and occaſions which have produced it; and it would be improper for me to do it in any place; becauſe, however well informed other men may think themſelves to be on this ſubject, I profeſs that my knowledge of the Internal Government of France, of the State of Parties in it, of the Temper of the People, of the Finances of the Country, and of the other circumſtances which have given riſe to this political Phenomenon, is not ſuch as to enable me to paſs a decided Judgment on the utility or inexpediency of the meaſure. As a Friend to Civil Freedom, which conſiſts not in democratic Licentiouſneſs, but in Obedience to Laws enacted by the general ſuffrage of a free people, I cannot but rejoice in the Emancipation of the French Nation from the Tyranny of Regal Deſpotiſm: but, deteſting the Deſpotiſm both of popular and ariſtocratic Demagogues, ſtill more than that of Individual Monarchs, my rejoicing is held back, leſt that Emancipation ſhould be more apparent than real. I truſt, however, it will in its effects be real: for, whatever may be the final Iſſue of this wonderful Struggle, I am induced to think that the French will obtain three things—a Trial by Jury—an *Habeas Corpus* Act—and an incorrupt Adminiſtration of public Juſtice—Bleſ-

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ſings theſe of ineſtimable value! which were not till lately ſo much as heard of in France; which conſtitute the felicity of Great-Britain; and in the Enjoyment of which it is our duty, as men, to wiſh all nations to participate. There may be ſome things in our Civil, and ſome in our Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution, which call for a temperate Reform; but ſtill we are a happy people, and do well to be jealous of any violent attempts to amend either *.—But omitting the conſideration of the Civil State of France; I will advert to the change which has been effected in its Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution, and which was the only reaſon for my making any mention at all of a Revolution, which has ſo greatly excited the attention of Europe.

None of you can have been ſo incurious as not to have re-

* Profeſſions of Attachment to our Conſtitution in Church and State have been made by me on ſo many occaſions, that I think it needleſs to repeat them on this. If any one, from the freedom with which I have been accuſtomed to ſpeak of certain defects in both, ſhould be diſpoſed to queſtion the ſincerity of theſe Profeſſions, nothing that I could ſay would remove his prejudice; I pray God to give him a more charitable mind. I leave it, however, to impartial men to decide, whoſe Attachment to the Conſtitution is the greateſt—that of him who labours to remove ſuch rotten parts of the glorious fabric of civil and religious freedom, as daily invite the attack of its enemies—or that of him who, not unconſcious of the danger, contents himſelf with thinking that it will not fall in his time. May the Wiſdom of our Rulers, ſhewn as well by their Moderation in removing what is unſound, as by their Firmneſs in retaining what is whole, preſerve this mighty Edifice, the Work of Ages, and the Envy of the World, from being levelled to the ground by the rude hand of Popular Diſcontent, of Fanatical Zeal, or Republican Violence!

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marked many alterations in the Gallican Church, which have been introduced into it by the Decrees of the National Aſſembly. I ſhall content myſelf with bringing to your recollection three of the chief.

The firſt reſpects the Diminution of the immenſe Revenues of ſome of the Miniſters of the Church, and the Augmentation of the ſcanty ones of others. Conſidering the different talents, natural and acquired, of different Miniſters; the different degrees of miniſterial capacity requiſite for the due diſcharge of the ſeveral offices exiſting in an eſtabliſhed Church; and the utility of diſtinction and ſubordination in ſuch Eſtabliſhments; I cannot think that many reaſonable men would be deſirous of ſeeing all Church Preferments reduced to the ſame level: but it may be wiſhed by all, that not only in France, but in England, and in every part of Chriſtendom, ſuch a well-apportioned proviſion might be made for the Clergy, that none of them might have ſo much, as to render them inattentive to the diſcharge of their reſpective functions; none of them ſo little, as to render an Accumulation of Benefices neceſſary for the ſupport of any one. The time, I think, will come, though I may not live to ſee it, when a more equitable diſtribution of the Revenues of the Church of England will be ſettled in a quiet and legal way. At preſent, Pluralities and Non-Reſidence are ſuch a diſgrace to our Eſtabliſhment as all ſerious Men wiſh to ſee removed: they are, I am diſpoſed to own, neceſſary Evils, ſpringing from the great number of Appropriations and Impropriations which have taken place amongſt us, by which ſome thouſands of Livings are become

of ſo little value, as to be utterly inadequate to the decent Maintenance of a Clergyman; and we all know how frequently the poverty of the Miniſter brings Religion itſelf into contempt, with the rude and undiſciplined part of mankind. The Revenue of the Church of England has been magnified, I apprehend, by many writers much above the truth: I at leaſt have no reaſon to think that it is more than ſufficient for making a proper proviſion for all its Miniſters. But without wiſhing to ſee all Preferments of the ſame Value, I ſhall never ceaſe to wiſh, that no Living in the Kingdom may be ſo ſmall, as to render it neceſſary for any man to have two. The Church of France, notwithſtanding what it has loſt, is yet richer (if I am rightly informed) abſolutely and relatively than the Church of England: its abſolute Revenue is ſaid to be about ſix millions ſterling; that of the Church of England falls much ſhort of two. In France there are about twenty-four millions of Inhabitants to be inſtructed by their Clergy; in England about eight.

The Suppreſſion of Monaſteries in the Gallican Church is another Change meriting our Approbation. Many perſons in the retirements of the Cloyſter had, unqueſtionably, their minds mortified to all worldly Concerns, and lifted up to Heaven with the pious fervour of true devotion; it would be want of charity to ſuppoſe otherwiſe: but it is no want of charity to ſuppoſe that many perſons of both ſexes were in early youth, and before they could form a due judgment of what would be for their future happineſs, immured in thoſe living ſepulchres, from ſordid conſiderations of family

expediency.

expediency. Monaſtic inſtitutions have never wanted their defenders; they are ſuited to the gloomy apprehenſions of Enthuſiaſts, and to the baſe views of Hypocrites: they are not peculiar to Chriſtianity; but wherever they exiſt, they have for their main ſupport either the Credulity of the Vulgar, or the Superſtition of the Opulent; and they will be aboliſhed in all countries, ſooner or later, in proportion to the increaſe of learning or the continuance of ignorance.

A third Change in the Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution of France deſerving our notice, is that complete Toleration which it holds out to all mankind in concerns of Religion. If any one ſhould think this to be a Change in the Civil, rather than in the Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution, I ſhall not diſpute with him about words; but proceed to remark, that the *Alliance* (as it has been called) *between Church and State* is not in France ſuppoſed to be ſo intimate, that danger muſt be apprehended by the State, unleſs Churchmen alone are eligible to all civil offices. Men who neither celebrate the Maſs, or pray to the Virgin Mary, or invocate Saints, or worſhip Images, or practiſe Auricular Confeſſion, or believe in Tranſubſtantiation, or fear the pains of Purgatory, or conform either in faith or worſhip to the doctrines and rites of the Eſtabliſhed Church—theſe men are not in France excluded from the rights of Citizenſhip, on account of their religious opinions. When we take an enlarged view of the nature of man, and of the different ſituations in which not only different nations, but different individuals in the ſame nation, are placed with reſpect to religious attainments, we muſt feel the neceſſity of vindicating

cating to every individual of the human race the abſolute right of worſhipping God in his own way, without loſing on that account the benefits accruing from a ſtate of civil Society.—Thou art a Chriſtian, and believeſt that Jeſus Chriſt was ſent from God, and that there is no other Name by which Men can be ſaved;—go and profeſs this thy belief at Pekin or Conſtantinople, and being there ſpurned with contempt, and excluded from all civil truſt and authority for not admitting the divine miſſions of Confucius or Mahomet, think whether thou wilt not have reaſon to accuſe the ruling powers in thoſe immenſe Empires of Injuſtice. If God Almighty thinks fit to tolerate different religions in the world, ſuited, there is reaſon to believe, to the different intellectual and moral attainments of mankind, ſurely it becomes us to be kindly affectioned towards thoſe who, agreeing with us in all the fundamental verities of the Chriſtian Religion, differ from us only in matters of little importance.

You will readily perceive that I am alluding to the Caſe of the Proteſtant Diſſenters amongſt ourſelves. I think it to be in no degree the duty of a Biſhop to attempt to influence the Judgment of his Clergy on political points; but I know it to be his duty to deliver his own Judgment, quietly and ſincerely, on every point in which he believes the intereſt of the Church of Chriſt is concerned; and an attentive peruſal of the Hiſtory of the Church, from its civil Eſtabliſhment under Conſtantine to the preſent time, has compelled me to believe that nothing has been of more diſſervice to Chriſtianity than that religious Bigotry with which different Sects have, in all ages and countries, perſecuted each other—*dum hic dicit Ego ſum Athanaſii,*

ille vero Ego ſum Socini; dum hic dicit Ego ſum Lutheri, ille vero Ego ſum Calvini, may it not be rightly ſaid σαρκικοι εστε παντες—

The time would fail me if I endeavoured to enumerate the multiplicity of Sects which have in different ages ſubſiſted, and which ſtill ſubſiſt in the Chriſtian Church; they amount to hundreds. This diverſity of opinion cannot be avoided, unleſs all men had the ſame humility not to be wiſe above what is written; the ſame ability to inveſtigate the truth of what has been written; and the ſame honeſty to profeſs it: but contumelious language, bitterneſs of ſpirit, and uncharitable cenſuring might be avoided, and ought to be avoided by us all. Chriſt is our common Maſter; to him we are accountable for the uſe of the reaſoning talent which God hath committed to our care; and it is clear, from every page of the Goſpel, that we ſhall not merit the favour of Chriſt by maltreating each other, under the pretence of ſerving him.

But it will be ſaid, it is the duty of the civil Magiſtrate to diſcourage all opinions in Religion which are oppoſite to the eſtabliſhed ones, and to hinder any man from holding an office whoſe faith is not correſpondent to the public faith, and that it is his duty to do this, becauſe there is ſuch an *Alliance between Church and State* as cannot be broken on either ſide without imminent danger to both.—I mean not to treat this mode of reaſoning with diſreſpect; it has had and it has Advocates of deſerved literary reputation: but I muſt ſay that it never convinced me. I know it is the duty of the civil Magiſtrate, not only to puniſh crimes, but to prevent the commiſſion of them; and as the belief of the exiſtence of a God

governing the affairs of this preſent World, and ordaining a future State of rewards and puniſhments, is amongſt the moſt powerful means of ſuch prevention; it ſeems to be his duty to provide, at the public expence, public Teachers of ſome Religion; and, in fact, every nation in the world has made ſuch a proviſion. A queſtion, however, here ariſes—Whether it be the duty of the Magiſtrate to provide at the public expence Teachers of one Sect of Chriſtians (for I ſpeak not now of Pagan or Mahometan Magiſtrates, but confine my conſideration to a Chriſtian Magiſtrate), or Teachers of every Sect into which his Society may happen to be divided. This is a queſtion which cannot perhaps be eaſily decided by thoſe who ſeriouſly conſider it: I muſt not, on this occaſion, undertake to diſcuſs it; I will rather aſſume as a principle to be admitted, that the morals of the Community will be better ſecured by an excluſive eſtabliſhment at the public expence of the Teachers of one Sect, than by a co-eſtabliſhment of the Teachers of different Sects of Chriſtians. Yet I can never admit that it is agreeable either to the principle on which civil ſociety is formed, or uſeful to the attainment of the ends men have in view in forming ſuch ſociety, that thoſe who differ from the Religion of the Magiſtrate ſhould, on account of that difference alone, be ſubject to perſecution; and an excluſion from civil offices is perſecution; it is not, indeed, the perſecution of the Inquiſition or of Smithfield; it differs from them in degree, but it reſembles them in kind. I have argued myſelf into this opinion in the following manner:—Puniſhment for religious opinions is Perſecution, and Evil of

any kind, inflicted by the authority of the civil Magiſtrate, is Puniſhment. This Evil may reſpect a Man's Perſon, or Liberty, or Property, or Character. Civil incapacity brought upon men by Law, is an Evil affecting their Property and their Character; their Character, as it expoſes them to the imputation of being bad citizens; their Property, as it takes from them the poſſibility of acquiring advantages attendant on certain civil offices. Theſe advantages, whether they conſiſt of wealth, power, influence, or honour, are worth ſomething; their value may be variouſly appreciated; yet being worth ſomething, the poſſibility of acquiring them is worth ſomething, and the taking away from any man that poſſibility on account of his Religion, is Perſecution *. The Law, indeed, does

* An objection to this manner of arguing has occurred to me, and I have no inclination to conceal it.—The ſupreme Magiſtrate in every civil community has a right to take from the Individuals compoſing that community, any portion of their *actual* property which he may judge requiſite for promoting the public Good, for ſecuring the public Safety. This principle, I believe, is not univerſally admitted; it appears, however, to me to be juſt; and this principle being admitted, does it not follow that the Magiſtrate has at leaſt an equal right to uſe, for the ſame ends, the *contingent* property of Individuals, attendant on their Eligibility to certain offices? May he not juſtly ſay to ſuch Individuals,—The Majority of the perſons conſtituting the civil ſociety of which you are members, is of opinion, that the public ſafety will be better ſecured by your being deprived of the property appertaining to certain offices, than by your being poſſeſſed of it. You, the Minority, are of a different opinion; and there is no common Judge to determine which is in the right. You are at liberty to form another civil Society; but whilſt you continue Members of this, you ought to acquieſce in the Judgment of the Majority.—This objection is not ſo ſtrong as that nothing can be ſaid to invalidate it; nor

does not permit every man to be a Clergyman, a Lawyer, or a Phyſician; but the ground of this prohibition is quite different from that by which men of integrity and ability, and every way qualified for the diſcharge of their duties, are hindered from executing civil offices on account of their religious opinions.

Nor is the Policy of excluding them from civil offices on account of their religious opinions, leſs queſtionable than the Juſtice of the meaſure. The Diſſenters are a numerous body in England; but they are divided into different ſects, and have as much objection to each other as any of them have to the Church. If you wiſh to keep the various denominations of Diſſenters disjoined, you ſhould remove from them every cauſe of combining their ſtrength; if you wiſh to mix them with the maſs of Citizens, you ſhould remove from them every ground of diſtinction. Were I a Diſſenter of the moſt rigid kind, did I think that every thing ought to be riſked for maintaining the cauſe of non-conformity, I ſhould deprecate, as the greateſt miſchief which could happen, the liberality of

nor is it ſo weak as that nothing can be urged in its ſupport; I am ſatisfied with having impartially ſtated it.

The day, I think, is not far diſtant, when that which the Houſe of Commons hath refuſed to acknowledge to be a debt of Juſtice due to the Diſſenters, will be conceded to them as a Boon from the State, as a pledge of brotherly Love from the liberality of the Church. Moderate Men in the interim (whether Churchmen or Diſſenters) will, it is hoped, exert their influence in abating the violence, in removing the bitterneſs, in calming the irritation which have unhappily been excited in the minds of many Individuals of both ſides.

a Britiſh Legiſlature in reſtoring Diſſenters of every denomination to the rights of Citizens.

It is often, and I hope juſtly, ſaid, that Churchmen (though there are ſome exceptions) are become more liberal than they uſed to be towards the Diſſenters: the obſervation, I believe, is as true, that the Diſſenters are become more liberal than they uſed to be towards Churchmen: But whatever doubts may be entertained concerning the diſpoſition of Individuals either amongſt Churchmen or Diſſenters, there is a fact, the mention of which ought not to be omitted—the Church of England hath been prayed for by name in the general Aſſembly of the Kirk of Scotland. What can be more likely to eſtabliſh and extend this harmony, than to aboliſh all civil occaſions of diviſion? It is not the quantity of oppreſſion which affects minds of ſenſibility, ſo much as the circumſtance of being oppreſſed at all. The Diſſenters feeling in themſelves a conſciouſneſs of being as much attached to the civil Conſtitution of the Country, and of having done as much for its preſervation, not only in bringing back Charles the Second, but in bringing in King William, and in ſeating the Houſe of Hanover on the Throne, and in reſiſting the Rebellions of fifteen and forty-five, as any other body of Citizens hath done, they think themſelves hardly dealt with in being denied the rights which others enjoy, becauſe ſome men are ſubject to groundleſs apprehenſions, or occupied by inveterate prejudices.

It is a common Error in politics to continue laws and uſages when the occaſions of introducing them have ceaſed. The

wiſdom

wiſdom of the Legiſlature has been aware of this Error in ſome Inſtances, and has taken occaſion to rectify it. The Roman Catholics have, on a former occaſion, and lately alſo, properly experienced this wiſdom. The Diſſenters too, have not only been relieved from the penalties of certain Statutes, paſſed againſt them in the reigns of Elizabeth and of James the Firſt, by the Toleration Act, but their Miniſters and Schoolmaſters have been exempted from the penalties of ſeveral Statutes of Charles the Second, by an Act paſſed in the Reign of his preſent Majeſty. It is worthy of remark, that every indulgence which has been ſhewn them by the Church, or by the State, has ſoftened their diſlike towards either of them: they have become better Citizens, as they have experienced more confidence from the State; they have become leſs of Diſſenters from the Church, as they have had leſs fears of Eccleſiaſtical Perſecution.

In what I have ſaid on this occaſion, I am not moved by any private regard for the Diſſenters; I have a perſonal acquaintance with few of them, an intimacy with none. Nor am I moved by any ſecret liking of the Eccleſiaſtical principles of the Diſſenters; for I prefer on ſerious, I hope, and well conſidered grounds—Prelacy to Preſbytery—the uſe of a Liturgy to extemporaneous prayer—a legal payment to a gratuitous ſupport of the Clergy:—but I am moved thereto by an impartial regard to Juſtice, and by an utter abhorrence of Bigotry and religious Intolerance of every kind. King Charles, in his Declaration from Breda, ſpoke of ſome grave and learned Preſbyterian Miniſters who had waited upon him in Holland, and

whom

whom he ſays he found to be " Perſons full of Zeal for the Peace of the Church and State; and neither Enemies (as they had been given out to be) of Epiſcopacy or Liturgy." I am in my conſcience convinced, that many diſſenting Miniſters are as much miſrepreſented to the Governors of the State now, as their predeceſſors had been to King Charles then. Some of them may diſlike all Church Eſtabliſhments, and may in their political Sentiments have a greater tendency to Republicaniſm than to a mixed Monarchy: but I think men of theſe principles are not many in number amongſt them; and it would be an haſty concluſion to ſay, that even theſe men would be zealous in reducing their ſpeculations to practice, that they would riſk the perſonal ſecurity which they now enjoy, the property of which they are now poſſeſſed, in attempting, by acts of violence, to introduce a change into the Conſtitution of either the Church or State.

In having thus freely expreſſed my Sentiments on what appears to me the Injuſtice and Impolicy of excluding men from civil offices on account of their religious perſuaſions, I am far from inſinuating any approbation whatever of the violent manner in which either the diſcipline or the doctrine of our Eſtabliſhed Church has been attacked: all violence, either of attack or defence, in ſuch matters, ſavours of Intolerance. When Unitarians and Trinitarians, when Churchmen and Diſſenters ſpeak ill, and think worſe of each other, for their ſeveral differences of opinion, they ſeem to me to overlook the main points in which they all agree, and to forget that they all are Chriſtians, that they have all one hope of their calling—an

expectation

expectation of eternal Life, as the Gift of God, through Jeſus Chriſt.

It muſt be admitted as a fundamental truth, derived from the equality in which we all ſtand to Chriſt our common Maſter, that no Society of Chriſtians whatever, or however diſtinguiſhed by rank, power, wealth, numbers, learning, can have the leaſt claim to any juſt authority of compelling others by threats, or calumnies, or penalties of any kind, to a fellowſhip of worſhip. You, they ought to ſay to all who diſſent from them, are as free as we are; we affect no dominion over your faith, we are not the Lords of God's Heritage: go and worſhip the Creator and the Conſervator of the Univerſe in your own way; uſe no ring in Marriage, no Surplice in public Worſhip, no particular poſture in receiving the Sacrament, no Sponſors when your Children are baptized, no Confirmation when they are grown up—but ſuffer us alſo to worſhip God in our way; let neither of us find fault with the other, but preſerving good-will, practiſing courteſy, interchanging good offices, let us all be perſuaded that at the laſt day our different ſervices will be accepted by him, whom God hath appointed Judge of all, with equal regard to the rectitude of our ſeveral intentions, and to the means we have uſed in acquiring information concerning the Truth. One of the beſt means we can uſe for the attainment of this end, is to keep our minds unprejudiced, open to Argument, and free from every degree of acrimony of ſentiment or expreſſion, againſt thoſe who differ from us on any point either of doctrine or diſcipline. If I know myſelf, I have a mind neither hoſtile to the eſtabliſhed

doctrines of the Church of England, nor attached to them with ſuch a blind and implicit reverence as to reprobate every diſcuſſion of them. I have ever practiſed in my own ſtudies, and I would encourage in yours, a free Spirit of Inquiry into the meaning of the Scriptures. This Spirit ought not, on the one hand, to degenerate into a petulant affectation of Singularity, as if nothing was right which was eſtabliſhed; nor ought it, on the other, to be ſo ſhackled in its operation, as to be afraid of queſtioning the truth of what may have been ſanctioned by public Authority. There was a time when our Anceſtors were Pagans; there was another period during which they were Papiſts; and if the doctrine of ſome men—that no change ought ever to be admitted in the tenets of a Church eſtabliſhed by Law—had been adhered to by them, we their Poſterity might at this day have been occupied with the Druids in cutting Miſletoe, or with the Catholics in tranſubſtantiating flour and water into the Subſtance of God!

The Goſpel of Chriſt has been polluted by the Craft of Men; it has ſuffered this pollution from the earlieſt Ages of the Church to the preſent times; and nothing, under God's Providence, ſeems more fitted to reſtore it to its original purity than the ſober Zeal of learned and unprejudiced Inquirers after truth. Stateſmen in general, and, I am ſorry to add, too many Churchmen, are enemies to free Inquiry *. It is a maxim

* In making this obſervation I have no view to Individuals; and I believe it to be as little applicable to the Stateſmen and Churchmen of this Country as of any other. But the Hiſtory of every Country in every Age evinces its truth.

with many of both denominations, that the Religion which is eſtabliſhed in a country muſt be maintained; and they are diſpoſed to calumniate and to puniſh thoſe who would call in queſtion any of its doctrines. This principle originates, probably, in the Churchman, from an apprehenſion of the Miſchief which may attend Innovation; and it originates, probably, in the Stateſman, either from a confined knowledge of the Chriſtian Syſtem, or from a belief that one Mode of Religion may anſwer the purpoſe of Government as well as another, and that all Religions are but State contrivances, to aſſiſt the Impotency, and to enlarge the Extent of human Laws. Whilſt this principle remains in the heart of any man, free Inquiry in religious concerns will, as far as his influence reaches, be checked; and if the temper of the times does not controul the temper of the man, pains and penalties will be inflicted on all thoſe, who, in conſcience, differ from the doctrines of the State.

The divine doctrines of our holy Religion want not the aid of human Laws for their Support. When Chriſtian Magiſtrates aſſume to themſelves the right of interpreting doubtful paſſages of Scripture in a definite Senſe, they pollute the Altar of the Lord, though with a view, perhaps, of adorning and defending it, and often ſanctify Error by the Authority of civil Laws. The Hiſtory of the Church, from the time of its civil Eſtabliſhment, affords a thouſand proofs of the truth of this remark. Examine the Acts of the Councils, convened by Imperial or Royal Authority in different parts of the Chriſtian World, from the Council of Nice to the Council of Trent, and

you will find, that in many of them ſuch doctrines were eſtabliſhed as we Proteſtants believe to be abſolute Errors. Examine the Confeſſions of Faith of the different Proteſtant Churches now ſubſiſting in Europe, and you will obſerve in many of them ſuch a diverſity of doctrine as will make you wiſh that none of them had aſſumed any portion of that Infallibility which they properly denied to the Church of Rome.

In fine, my Brethren, you, perhaps, will think it to be your duty, and I am convinced that it is mine, to endeavour to ſecure the protection of God in another World, by propagating the pure Goſpel of his Son in this; and the purity of that Goſpel can by no mean be ſo well aſcertained as by a modeſt and ſincere Inquiry into what has been written by the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, rather than into what has been delivered by Calvin or Arminius, by Sabellius or Socinus.

FINIS.